

## Food Programs Lose Ground in Governor's Budget

Governor Rendell presented his fiscal year 2008–09 budget proposal in an address to a joint session of the state Senate and House on February 5. Among the highlights of the \$28.3 billion spending plan – an overall increase of 4.2% over the current year budget – was an absence of a general tax increase while proposing significant new investments to extend initiatives that the governor began during his first term.

On the same day as Rendell's address, the budget, a voluminous document detailing his spending plans was also released. Upon quick review, the winners and losers were abundantly clear in the spending priorities that mark the beginning of his second term. Among those items at the top of the Governor's agenda were health care and education. Much further down his list was proposed spending for food programs.

Building on his *Prescription for Pennsylvania*, an initiative to develop a better health care system and slow the growth of medical costs, the governor has proposed ultimately extending state-subsidized health care to some 800,000 uninsured Pennsylvanians. Approval of *Cover All Pennsylvanians* would provide health insurance for approximately 150,000 people who cannot afford it at an additional cost of \$480 million in its first year. Basic education would get a boost of \$291 million in 2008–09, bringing the education budget total to \$11.8 billion. This largest one-year increase in basic education support in over two decades is actually the first step in

the Governor's six-year plan to boost state government's share of funding for public schools by \$2.6 billion.

With regard to funding for food programs, they did not fare as well.

Proposed funding for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) was held flat at \$18 million. At a time when food costs are increasing – as is the demand for food assistance – this level of funding is especially troublesome. It not only equates to a real loss in buying power, it also marks an emerging downward trend with two budget cycles of flat

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## Farm Bill 2008: Still Optimistic!

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the Senate passed its version of the Farm Bill after much debate on the floor, giving hope to the many children and families who would benefit from the proposed changes. Agriculture Committee Leadership on both the House and Senate sides expressed interest in jump-starting conference discussions over the December break, listing February 1<sup>st</sup> as a target date for wrapping up negotiations. Even though that date has passed, experts remain optimistic that we will see a finalized bill in the coming months. Currently, the debate is between the House Ways & Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee to produce alternative ways to fund changes in this year's proposed bill. The Bush Administration has stated numerous times that it would veto both House and Senate versions of the bill as they are currently written, prompting Congress to rework certain aspects of the legislation.

The Nutrition Titles of both bills provide strong advancements for the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); however, there are key differences between the two versions. The most important distinction between the House and Senate Nutrition Titles is the structure and timeframe of the proposed changes. Keeping with the historic

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# Economic Stimulus Plan Passes Leaves Out Food Stamps

With signs of a weakening economy all around us, the federal government hurried to pull together an economic stimulus plan that provides a jolt to the American economy. Bipartisan leaders and economic experts agreed that increases in food stamp benefits to low-income Americans would be one of the most effective ways to bolster economic activity with a very short turnaround time. Research has shown that when resources are put into the hands of America's most vulnerable families, there is a very high probability that those resources will be spent quickly and in full. This, in turn, boosts the economy and helps low-income Americans in the continual struggle against food insecurity.

Economists project that food stamp benefits would provide a tremendous return on investment: approximately \$1.73 for every dollar. In contrast, every dollar spent in bonus depreciation benefits for businesses (part of the final approved package) triggers a meager \$.27 for the economy.

Unfortunately, food stamp increases were not part of the stimulus packages that came out of either the House or the Senate, nor were they included in the final \$168 billion stimulus package that was approved on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

PA Senator Bob Casey fully supported food stamp increases as part of a stimulus package, along with extensions on Unemployment Insurance (UI), an additional program that was not included in the final stimulus package. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman

Tom Harkin also stood behind the food stamp proposal, calling increases in food stamps "the biggest bang for the buck right there."

Supporters for food stamp increases weren't just on the left side of the aisle either. Conservative GOP economist Martin Feldstein asserted that "assistance to lower-income people should come from temporary increases in the food stamp and supplemental income programs."

In addition to the House's individual and family tax rebates and business tax breaks, the final bipartisan agreement included the Senate additions of rebate checks to senior citizens receiving Social Security benefits and to 250,000 disabled veterans. Checks could start appearing in mailboxes as early as May.



The Rendell Administration is also proposing a PA economic stimulus package. This would build upon the current Economic Stimulus Program that was approved in 2004 by the General Assembly. In addition to that infrastructure package, Rendell's plan would also borrow \$130 million from PA's Rainy Day Fund to provide one-time tax rebates to families that participate in the state's Tax Back Program. Rendell maintains that this would be the most efficient yet effective action because it would reach hard-working, low-income families with children already identified by the Program. Currently, Hunger Action is collaborating with other hunger advocates across the state to discuss alternatives to the tax rebate proposal. Check Hunger Action's website for updates at [www.pahunger.org](http://www.pahunger.org).

*Lindsay Briggs*

*Governor's Budget...from front page* funding coming on the heels of a budget cut of \$750,000 in the preceding year. The reduction in funding for food programs across budget cycles is also evident in proposed support for The Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). Starting with 2006-07 funding of \$3 million, this program experienced cuts in 2007-08 when funding was set at \$2.25 million and would again with the proposed expenditure of \$2 million in the 2008-09 budget. Added to this downward spiral is the funding recommendation for School Food Services within the Governor's *Prescription for Pennsylvania*. It has been seriously slashed from \$6.5 million in the current budget to his \$4.8 million recommendation for 2008-09.

In September 2007, Hunger Action's Board of Directors recommended that the SFPP be funded at \$22 million and the FMNP at \$3 million. Visit Hunger Action's website at [www.pahunger.org](http://www.pahunger.org) for updates.

Now that the budget has been released, House and Senate Appropriation committee hearings are scheduled to be held from February 19 through March 6. This will be followed shortly by the negotiation process to hammer out an identical spending plan across the two chambers. Slated to begin in late March or early April, these sessions will heat up in June as all eyes will be on the deadline of midnight June 30.

During the coming weeks and months the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center will be actively advocating for hungry Pennsylvanians to get their fair share in the 2008 – 2009 budget that is ultimately approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Rendell.

*Joseph Quattrocchi*

# Highlights of the President's Budget

Once again, hunger advocates are disappointed with President Bush's 2009 budget. Listed below are the President's proposed funding levels for select programs. **Please note: all amounts are in thousands and figures given to show impact of proposed funding are real dollars figures (adjusted for inflation).** Amounts taken from the Coalition on Human Needs.

- Food Stamp Program included a contingency to cover only an increase in participation and food prices. It did not consider any provisions likely to be included in the 2007 Farm Bill. The President's budget also eliminated categorical eligibility for nearly 300,000 people that only receive SSI or TANF (non-cash assistance).
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program was flat funded at \$190,000. In real terms, it means a \$4,389 cut from '08. Similarly, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program was cut by \$53,000 – a 35 percent cut.
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program was eliminated for the third year in a row. In 2008, Congress funded it at \$140,000.
- Women, Infants and Children was increased to \$6,251,000 which is still a \$97,335 cut from '08.
- Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program was flat funded at \$16,000 – a cut of \$370; Farmers' Market Nutrition Program was also flat funded at \$24,000 – a cut of \$554.
- Community Services Block Grant, which was funded at \$653,800 in 2008, was eliminated.
- Child Care & Development Block Grant was flat-funded at \$2,062,081 for the seventh year in a row – a cut of \$47,634.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was decreased to \$2,000,000 – a cut of \$629,703.

The budget is set to move quickly through Congress. Check out our website [www.pahunger.org](http://www.pahunger.org) for updates and opportunities to give voice to those hurt most by these cuts to vital nutrition and work-support programs.

*Laura Carpenter*



## Director's Column

This is my first column in *The Pennsylvania Hunger Advocate*, and I'm not sure what to write.

I started the job as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center on January 14. In the past month I've been immersed in a crash course to learn about hunger in our midst. I've been meeting people, talking to them on the phone, combing through files, reviewing the literature, reading and responding to emails and asking questions. Lots of questions.

Why does a problem of this gravity and magnitude (the last time I checked, food was a basic human need, isn't it still?) exist in our fair state, let alone in a country as prosperous as ours? How is it that tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians – our neighbors, people that attend the same church, those we know from our kids' ball games, **mostly working people** – may not know where their next meal is coming from?

As I perused the recently released "Executive Budget" I wondered if our leader was thinking about the problem of hunger in his state when crafting the government's spending plan for the upcoming year. Injecting huge sums of money to enhance the quality of education so that today's students may achieve their full potential is laudable, as is the momentum he has parlayed towards ensuring all Pennsylvanians have health coverage, but what's the point? Is not a full belly a prerequisite to children being able to focus on learning and not that gnawing feeling in their stomachs? Is not partaking of ample, nutritious food every day one of the best methods of preventative health care?

Although my education relative to the "whys" and "wherefores" will be ongoing, I do know that any potential resolution to the problem will come through action alone. The opportunity – and challenge – given to me in leading the Hunger Action Center is that it has enabled me to join the fight against hunger. I am now among like-minded people who are incredulous that the problem of hunger even exists with such bounty around us. Together we can and (however incrementally) will make a difference.

I may be having some trouble knowing exactly what to say at this point in time because I've learned accepting the status quo regarding hunger is so totally unacceptable. But I am also less perplexed about what I can do.

# Feeding Kids Over the Summer Just Got “Simplified”!

Does your organization serve a lot of children over the summer? Are you wondering how you can provide meals to feed hungry children in your community?

Now is the time to start making plans for the summer. Summer programs that operate in low-income areas or serve primarily low-income children can receive federal funds to provide snacks and meals through the new Simplified Summer Food Program. This program was previously only available in select states but has recently been expanded nationwide. This provides an exciting opportunity to increase the number of children receiving nutritious food during the summer months.



By participating in the Simplified Summer Food Program, your organization can help eliminate hunger in the summer, a time when many low-income children are not guaranteed a meal as they are when school is in session.

Troy Williams, Executive Director of Lebanon County Christian Ministries and Simplified Summer Food Program sponsor, understands how important this program is for many children in his area. “For most of the children we feed through the Summer Food Service Program, it is the only nutritionally balanced meal they eat. For most of them, their parent(s) are working and they are left to fend for themselves when it comes to lunch or dinner for the day. The SFSP enables us, Lebanon County Christian Ministries, to provide meals to children whom may not otherwise have a meal to eat.”

The Simplified Summer Food Program is now available in all states and removes complicated accounting rules that were previously required through the traditional Summer Food Service Program. This dramatically cuts paperwork and provides sponsors with the full federal reimbursement for each meal they serve.

To qualify, a site must either be located in a low-income area (where 50 percent or more of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals) or serve primarily low-income children (at least half of the children enrolled in the program are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals).

To learn more about how you can help kids in your area, contact Lindsay Briggs at 717.233.6705 or [lbriggs@pahunger.org](mailto:lbriggs@pahunger.org).

*Lindsay Briggs*

*Farm Bill...from front page*

precedent of all other Farm Bills, the House version would make all changes to the Nutrition Title permanent law. Conversely, the Senate version would end funding for nutrition improvements after only five years. This would put countless low-income Americans at risk unless the same changes were renewed and paid for at the end of that five-year period.

However, many hunger advocates are in favor of the FSP improvements contained in the Senate-passed bill, including raising the outdated asset limits (as opposed to solely indexing them as in the House version) and expanding states’ options for providing transitional food stamps to families that have worked their way off of cash assistance programs.

Both House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill lift the cap on the childcare deduction and increase the \$10 minimum monthly benefit for the FSP as well as increase TEFAP commodities purchases.

It remains essential that the House and Senate Conference Committee produce a Farm Bill with the strongest possible Nutrition Title. In contrast, if there is a long-term extension of current law, Pennsylvanians will continue to see empty shelves in emergency food pantries and food cupboards. Additionally, low-income families will be forced to live on monthly food stamp allotments that have eroded continuously since 1996.

Most recently, on February 13, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson released a Farm Bill proposal that would fund Nutrition Title improvements at \$8.5 billion, \$3 billion below the amount the House passed last July. Again, it is imperative that the Nutrition Title is adequately funded in order to make the necessary progressive changes.

To find out how you can help urge the strongest Nutrition Title for the Farm Bill, visit our website at [www.pahunger.org](http://www.pahunger.org).

*Lindsay Briggs*

# Upcoming Conference - A Must Attend!

Don't miss our eighth annual **Strengthening the Food Resource Safety Net** conference to be held on May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel in Harrisburg. Principal sponsors are Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center and the PA Nutrition Education Network. These exciting keynote presentations will be featured over the two-day slate:



**Great Speakers; Great Food**

## Learning By Dialogue

Joye A. Norris, Ed.D.

Learning By Dialogue was created by educator and trainer Dr. Joye Norris. Dr. Norris has been working with educators since 1991, offering a learner-centered, dialogue approach to workshop design and facilitation skills. She has extensive experience with Extension programs, WIC, and other health-related organizations. Her book, *From Telling to Teaching*, is being used nationally, and is included in the curricula of several universities that have nutrition



**Networking is Key**

education programs. Joye strives to put passion in the hearts of educators and trainers—a passion for learning, for teaching, and for tapping into the tremendous potential of those they teach . . . and themselves.

## Food Marketing to Kids: Problems, Policies and Priorities

Margo Wootan, D.Sc.

The National Academies' Institute of Medicine concluded that food marketing affects children's food preferences, food choices, their diets and health. Children are exposed to over \$10 billion worth of marketing through advertising, "advergaming" on the Internet, contests, licensed characters and in schools. Companies also market to children by ensuring that their



## Group Activities

products are wherever children are, especially in schools. Dr. Wootan will explore the amount and types of marketing aimed at children and how to reduce and counter the effects of junk-food marketing at the national, state and local levels. Dr. Wootan is the director of nutrition policy at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), one of the country's leading health advocacy organizations that specializes in food, nutrition and public health issues. During her time at CSPI, she led the successful effort to require trans fat labeling on packaged foods and

worked on improving school foods and reducing junk-food marketing aimed at children.



## Workshops Galore

### Food Stamps as Medicine

Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH

The Food Stamp Program is described as our nation's first line of defense against hunger and helps thousands of families every year. However, many physicians and other medical professionals also regard food stamps as an effective form of medicine to combat childhood food insecurity. Food stamps also play an important role in preventing food insecurity in the citizen children of immigrants. Dr. Chilton is now the Principal Investigator of The Philadelphia GROW Project and C-SNAP Philadelphia. In addition to her roles within those projects, she is also a professor at the Drexel School of Public Health.

Watch for additional conference details on our website at [www.pahunger.org/html/events/events.html](http://www.pahunger.org/html/events/events.html) and in our April issue of **The Pennsylvania Hunger Advocate**. You can register at <http://panen.psu.edu/Events/08annualconference.htm> or call Lindsay Briggs at 717-233-6705.

*Lindsay Briggs*

## SB 9 Update

First reported in the October 2007 issue of **The Pennsylvania Hunger Advocate**, Senate Bill 9, which would crack down on the alleged abuse of Pennsylvania's public services by illegal immigrants, was approved Tuesday by the State Government Committee. Sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati, R-Jefferson, the measure was approved by a 6-4 party-line vote.

Following Scarnati's assertion that states need to take action because the federal government has failed to address illegal immigration, the bill would require individuals applying for benefits such as Medicaid, unemployment benefits and college tuition assistance to first present identification issued by a state or the federal government. Food assistance programs provided by private agencies would fall within the purview of the bill when the food is purchased with funds from the General Assembly.

Although he will not try to rush passage of the bill, Scarnati wants a Senate floor vote before the summer recess.

*Joseph Quattrocchi*

## Food Stamp Event

On March 26 at 1 PM, Hunger Action, in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture - Food and Nutrition Services, the PA Department of Public Welfare, and Giant Food Stores, will be providing food stamp promotion and application assistance at the Kline Village Giant in Harrisburg.

Shoppers will be able to determine whether or not they may be eligible for the Food Stamp Program. They will also be able to apply on site in a private location or set up an appointment for a telephone application.

Following this event, FNS and the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank will be hosting a senior hunger roundtable discussion. Watch for a follow-up story in an upcoming edition of *The Pennsylvania Hunger Advocate*.

Check Hunger Action's website for more details and any updates for these events at [www.pahunger.org/html/events/events.html](http://www.pahunger.org/html/events/events.html).

*Laura Carpenter*



### Food Stamp Outreach

**1-800-634-2033**

Since July 2007, Hunger Action has screened over 415 households and applied for nearly 350 of those households for the Food Stamp Program. Through our toll-free line, we have been able to help over 1,125 individuals!



## Former Director Awarded

Former Hunger Action Executive Director Berry Friesen was presented with the 'Investing in Our Future' award at this year's Farm Show by the PA Department of Agriculture. Secretary Wolff praised Friesen for his advocacy work surrounding the 2007 Farm Bill, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, the School Breakfast Initiative, and the minimum wage increase, to name a few of his accomplishments while at Hunger Action. From left: Former Board President Patrick Druhan, Former ED Berry Friesen, Executive Director Joseph Quattrocchi, and Board President Tim Whelan.

*Laura Carpenter*



## Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network Update

*The Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network operates under the fiscal and legal auspices of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. Inclusion of nutrition information in **The Pennsylvania Hunger Advocate** underscores the interdependent mission of these two entities and is provided as a service to **Hunger Advocate** readers. Political opinions or positions expressed in this newsletter are exclusively those taken by Hunger Action.*

According to our mission statement, the PA NEN is "a partnered effort working to foster the development and dissemination of innovative, evidence-based nutrition education to improve the diets of primarily low-income populations."

One of the ways in which we seek to fulfill our mission is by creating opportunities for nutrition education in places where it may not otherwise occur. This year, the PA NEN is focusing on two venues in particular: County Assistance Offices



(CAOs) and food pantries. These sites represent the physical locations where individuals can apply for food stamps or receive emergency foods. Wouldn't it be great if, at the same place, individuals could learn about the best ways to use those services to provide themselves and their families with a healthy and affordable diet?

The PA NEN is currently supporting two different initiatives in these locations. The first initiative is the "On the Table" booklet, which is an adaptation of a project previously completed by Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. This colorful county-specific resource booklet compiles

messages about ways to eat healthy on a tight budget with descriptions and local contact information for both federal nutrition programs and local nutrition education projects (provided by TRACKS). This booklet has been provided to CAOs in 11 counties.

Feedback from both CAO staff and clients about "On the Table" has been extremely positive so far; most people appreciate the collection of all this information into one easy-to-read booklet. Clients have commented that they like receiving a tangible resource to take with them as they leave the CAO office. A nutrition educator in one county requested copies of "On the Table" to distribute at her own agency after seeing the booklet at the local CAO.

The second initiative supported by the PA NEN represents an innovative method to teach individuals about nutrition. Much of the client time at CAOs and food pantries is spent waiting, which often results in boredom and frustration. However, this "downtime" also creates a perfect opportunity to teach about nutrition if it is done in a non-forceful and entertaining way. To address this opportunity, the PA NEN has provided selected food pantries and CAOs with DVD players along with a DVD titled "Good Food TV." This short movie is part of a kit developed in California for use in CAO waiting rooms. The DVD features short segments with

community members and nutrition experts demonstrating fast, inexpensive meals while discussing tips about healthy eating. Also



included are a series of recipe cards and a brochure with additional tips. This format is appropriate for viewing while waiting in line; even clients who are only able to catch a few minutes of the DVD while waiting find it interesting and educational.

Clients enjoy the recipe cards – some pantries report that clients return the next month asking for additional recipes. We have also found that both CAO and food pantry staff are excited about this opportunity to provide their clients with nutrition information without adding to their own already busy workload. One director noted that the DVD entertains clients and helps to "keep people occupied in the waiting room."

The PA NEN is excited about these opportunities to provide nutrition education. We hope to expand these projects over the next few years. Please feel free to contact us at [panen@pahunger.org](mailto:panen@pahunger.org) with any comments or questions about how you may be able to support nutrition education efforts in your area.

*Linda Kronheim,*  
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## Don't Miss Hunger Action's Annual One Great Lunch with 8 Great Chefs!

Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center's ninth annual benefit "One Great Lunch with 8 Great Chefs" will be held in conjunction with the Central PA Chapter of the American Culinary Federation on Monday, April 28, 2008, from 12:00 Noon until 1:30 PM at the Hilton Harrisburg on Second Street.

Participants will enjoy a sumptuous and entertaining four-course luncheon prepared by top local chefs! This year's menu includes Cream of Crab Soup, Mushroom Risotto, Chicken Cordon Bleu, and a Triple Chocolate Bavarian! The chefs will also provide lively demonstrations – both live and on screen – on how the delectable meals are prepared.

"One Great Lunch with 8 Great Chefs" is just that, as well as a great way to treat or say "thank you" to a friend or an associate. **Tickets for "One Great Lunch" are \$25 and are available by calling Hunger Action at 717-233-6705.**

*Lindsay Briggs*

The official registration and financial information of the PA Hunger Action Center may be obtained by calling the PA Department of State, toll free within Pennsylvania, at 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



**Chef Reis' demonstration at last year's event.**

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